

AMENDMENT

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IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please insert the following paragraph before "BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION."

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This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/971,764 filed on November 17, 1997, now U.S. Patent 6,009,413 issued on December 28, 1999, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/337,097 filed on November 10, 1994, now abandoned.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Amended) An electronic shopping system, comprising:
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a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer, said first connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity;
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a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer, said second connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity;
- a database at said network host computer for storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer;
- a first computer program at said network host computer for assimilating said product information; and

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a third network connection between said network host computer and a customer computer, said third network connection for transmitting said assimilated product information to said customer computer and for transmitting real time updates to said assimilated product information, said real time updates obtained in accordance with said first network connection and said second network connection.

2. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein said first network connection and said second network connection further comprises:

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a network connection between said first merchant computer and a regional host computer;

a network connection between said second merchant computer and said regional host computer; and

a network connection between said regional host computer and said network host computer, wherein said regional host computer receives said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer and transmits said product information to said network host computer.

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5. (Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said first network connection comprises a switch in communication with said first merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said product information from said first merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.

6. (Amended) The system of claim 5 wherein said first network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.

7. (Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said second network connection comprises a switch in communication with said second merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said product information from said second merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.

8. (Amended) The system of claim 7 wherein said second network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.

9. (Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity are selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.

11. (Amended) A method for electronic shopping, comprising the steps of:
transmitting product information from a first merchant computer to a network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity;

transmitting product information from a second merchant computer to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a network connection between a customer computer and a host computer in communication with said database, said customer computer adapted to display information received from said host computer;

receiving at said host computer a request from said customer computer for product information from said database;

assimilating product information from said database in accordance with said request from said customer computer;

transmitting from said host computer to said customer computer said assimilated product information;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer; and

updating said assimilated product information at said customer computer in response to a request from said customer computer for a real-time update of said assimilated product information with product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer.

13. (Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity is selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.

18. (Amended) A method for obtaining real time product information comprising the steps of:

establishing a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer;

transmitting product information from said first merchant computer to said network host computer;

establishing a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer;

transmitting product information from said second merchant computer to said network host computer;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a connection between said network host computer and a customer computer;

receiving a request for product information from said customer computer;

assimilating product information in response to said request from said customer computer;

transmitting said assimilated product information to said customer computer;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer; and

updating said assimilated product information at said customer computer with updated product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer.

19. (Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with connectivity selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.

20. (Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.

21. (Amended) A real time shopping system comprising:

product information from a plurality of merchant computers;

a plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and a host computer, said network connections for uploading said product information to said host computer;

a database at said host computer for storing said product information from said plurality of merchant computers;

a computer program at said host computer for assimilating said product information;

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a connection between said host computer and a customer computer, said connection for transmitting to said customer computer said assimilated product information;

updates to said assimilated product information, said updates obtained in accordance with said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer; and

a display at said customer computer for presenting said assimilated product information and said updates to said assimilated product information.

22. (Amended) The system of claim 21 further comprising a regional host computer, said regional host computer adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.

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24. (Amended) The system of claim 21 further comprising a switch, said switch adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.